

**EXHIBIT 12: Article printout by family,
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attached to: “EXHIBIT LIST IN SUPPORT OF
PETITIONER’S REPLY TO GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE
(DKT. #319) TO MOTION UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 2255 TO
VACATE, SET ASIDE, OR CORRECT SENTENCE (DKT.
#291)”; and in support of “PETITIONER’S REPLY TO
GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE (DKT. #319) TO MOTION
UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 2255 TO VACATE, SET ASIDE, OR
CORRECT SENTENCE (DKT. #291)”

by Brian David Hill

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MENTAL HEALTH > NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS > AUTISM > AUTISM
& FAMILY LIFE

How to Stop Your Autistic Child From Taking Their Clothes Off

By [Lisa Jo Rudy](#) Updated on May 23, 2022

✓ [Medically reviewed](#) by [Pilar Trelles, MD](#)

✓ [Fact checked](#) by [Nick Blackmer](#)

Parents of toddlers often worry about when their child suddenly takes all of their clothes off. Not only is public nudity frowned upon after infancy, but diaper-less children who are not [potty-trained](#) can cause a real mess.

While parents of typical children can usually resolve this issue at an early age, the same may not be true of parents of [children with autism](#). In some cases, the behavior may persist well beyond what is considered an acceptable age. This may not only cause problems at school but attract upsetting calls from parents or teachers.





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This article explains why some children with autism have trouble keeping their clothes on. It also offers practical tips on how to help a child with autism stay dressed and learn new behaviors.

Why Children With Autism Undress

In most cases, children with autism remove their clothes because they're uncomfortable. This can occur even if you've chosen comfortable clothing made of soft, natural fibers.

The behavior tends to occur because children with autism often have sensory challenges that cause them to react strongly to tactile (related to touch) and even visual sensations.^[1]

Among some of the examples:

A child with autism may be overly sensitive to scratchy seams and tags.



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They may be reacting to itchiness caused by allergies.

They may find a new piece of clothing or a fabric pattern distressing.

The issue is complicated by the fact that children with autism don't respond to other people's reactions in the same way that typical kids do. They have limitations in their comprehension of emotional cues that typical kids can otherwise pick up. ^[2]

For example:

A child with autism may be less aware of others' expectations of them.

They may not be attuned to the idea of imitating their peers.

They may not understand what is being asked of them by frustrated adults.

They may not have the language skills to describe the discomfort they're feeling.

Recap

Children with autism may remove their clothes if they find the sensation uncomfortable or distressing. They may not understand what they are doing is inappropriate because they often lack the ability to comprehend the emotional cues of others around them. ^[2]

Related: [20 Ways to Help a Child With Autism to Manage Meltdowns](#)

How to Help Your Child Stay Dressed

Given the reality that a child with autism may have some difficulties keeping those clothes on, how should you as a parent or guardian respond?

There are a few routes you can take:

Identify and Adjust the Problem



discomfort or distress.

If your child is verbal, simply ask what is making them uncomfortable. But avoid general questions like "Are you uncomfortable?" Instead, ask if the piece of clothing is scratchy or tight. Be specific.

If your child is not verbal, try out several outfits and see which ones they are more responsive to and less responsive to.

When buying new clothes, remove all tags or anything that can press against the skin. Run your finger along the seams and hems, and snip off any burrs or loose strings you find.

If your child is responding to clothing that is too loose, find clothes that give a little squeeze. A less expensive option is to choose Lycra/spandex shirts, shorts, or leggings that provide a little compression. You can also opt for a more expensive compression suit or [weighted vest](#).

Related: [Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder, and Sensory Integration](#)

Use Behavioral Modification

If you can't identify a sensory cause for the behavior, the next step is to actively teach your child to keep their clothes on. This involves behavioral modification techniques that use positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and compassionate adjustment of inappropriate ones.^[3]

There are several things you can do:

Teach your child using picture books like "Where Do Pants Go?" by Rebecca van Slyke.

Draw attention to how their peers stay dressed.

Create a sticker chart, awarding stars or stickers if your child keeps their clothes on for a specific amount of time.

Tools like sticker charts are a type of reward system^[4] commonly used in [applied behavioral analysis \(ABA\)](#). ABA is a form of therapy that focuses



strategies specific to your child.

Find Practical Solutions

If neither clothing adjustments nor behavioral modifications help, you may need to find practical, short-term solutions. This involves making it physically impossible for your child to remove their clothes.

There are several ways to do this:

Put fasteners in the back so your child can't reach them.

Dress your child in layers so that it is harder to fully strip.

Buy footed outfits, like pajamas or onesies, and put them on backward.

Use a safety pin to block a zipper from being unzipped.

Replace snaps with more complex fasteners, such as hook-and-eye fasteners.

Recap

You can help a child with autism keep their clothes on by identifying and addressing the cause of their discomfort. You can also use positive reinforcement to reward a child for keeping their clothes on. As a stopgap measure, find clothes that are more difficult to remove.

Summary

Children with autism will sometimes take off their clothes if they find them uncomfortable or distressing. While this is also true of typical kids, children with autism may continue to do so at a later age. Part of the reason for this is that they don't pick up on emotional cues as typical children do. As a result, they may not comprehend that what they are doing is inappropriate.

You can help a child with autism keep their clothes on by identifying the cause of their discomfort. You can also teach the child to keep their clothes



As a stopgap, find clothes that are difficult to remove. You can also put their clothes on backward so they can't reach the fasteners.

A Word From Verywell

The good news is that the vast majority of children with autism do eventually learn to keep their clothes on. In the meantime, keep calm and focus on rewarding the child for appropriate behaviors rather than punishing them for inappropriate ones.

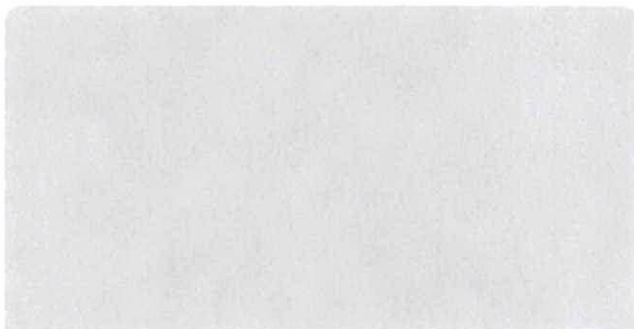
Punishing a child with autism for undressing does little to change behaviors—and may only escalate the situation by making you more upset.

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